

# Jane ★ Nelson

Capitol Update

Fall 2008

**Dear friends,**

*I am writing to update you on issues taking shape at our State Capitol and to respectfully ask for your assistance in preparing for the upcoming session of the Texas Legislature.*

*Because decisions made in Austin have a major impact on our region, it is my responsibility as your state senator to fight for our shared priorities and values. I must also defend our community against potentially harmful provisions in the more than 6,000 pieces of legislation typically filed during a legislative session.*

*I know your time is valuable. However, if you can take a moment to fill out the enclosed survey and return it to my office, it would help me tremendously as we meet the challenges ahead. Your input is critically needed on the issues of greatest concern to our region: transportation, education, health care, tax reform, border security and many others.*

*Additionally, your comments are appreciated throughout the session. If you hear breaking news that affects you, your family, your business – whether positively or negatively – I need to know as quickly as possible. E-mails are the quickest – and preferred – way of getting information to me during session. However, please do not hesitate to contact me by fax, phone or mail using the contact information provided below.*

*Thank you in advance for taking the time to respond. Your input helps me better represent you in the Texas Senate!*

Very truly yours,

*Senator Jane Nelson*

Senator Jane Nelson



*Senator Nelson receives an award from the National Federation of Independent Business. She was the only State Senator to log a perfect 100% voting record in support of small business. (Photo Credit: Highland Village News Connection)*



*Senator Nelson speaks after voters approve Proposition 15, which she sponsored to help fight cancer in Texas.*

**Rank the issues you consider the greatest challenge facing our state and sound off on a variety of topics in our Senate District 12 Survey.**

Page 4 or online at [www.nelson.senate.state.tx.us/survey](http://www.nelson.senate.state.tx.us/survey)

## COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Senator Jane Nelson is a former public school teacher who was elected to the Texas Senate after serving two terms on the State Board of Education. She currently serves on 8 legislative committees that oversee health policy, the budget, the structure of government agencies, and the confirmation of gubernatorial appointments, including:

- Health & Human Services, Chair
- Finance
- Government Organization
- Nominations
- Joint Committee on Medicaid Reform, Chair
- Joint Health & Human Services Eligibility Oversight, Chair
- Health & Long-Term Care Insurance Incentives
- Texas Legislative Council

Visit the Texas Senate online at [www.senate.state.tx.us](http://www.senate.state.tx.us) for more details.



## LEGISLATIVE CALENDAR

According to the Texas Constitution, the Legislature meets every odd-numbered year to fulfill its one constitutional requirement -- adopt a two-year budget. However, more than 6,000 proposed changes to state law are also likely to be considered.

- ★ **First Day to Prefile Bills:**  
November 13, 2008
- ★ **Opening Day:**  
January 13, 2009
- ★ **Adjournment:**  
June 1, 2009
- ★ **Last Day for Governor to Veto/Sign Bills:**  
June 21, 2009

## CONTACT SENATOR NELSON

### CAPITOL OFFICE:

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### DISTRICT OFFICE:

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# BUSINESS & ECONOMY



*Senator Nelson receives the Greater Keller Chamber of Commerce's "Member of the Month" award.*

## ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

As the nation struggles to achieve energy independence, Texas is leading the way as the nation's top energy producing state. "Most people think of Texas as a leader in oil, but we have the most prolific and the most diverse energy portfolio in the nation," Senator Nelson said. Texas produces the most wind energy in the nation -- doubling the production of No. 2 California. Additionally, the Lone Star State is home to the nation's largest formation of natural gas -- the Barnett Shale in North Texas. Several interim panels are looking for environmentally friendly ways to maximize Texas' energy production, including:

- Review Texas' current air emissions policies and evaluate potential ways to make additional improvements;
- Assess the environmental impact of new electric generation sources and technologies;
- Review all state-created river authorities, including the powers exercised by each authority and the advisability of subjecting these authorities to legislative review.

## ECONOMIC PROGRESS

So far the Texas economy is holding up well in an otherwise difficult national economy, adding 69,300 jobs in the first quarter of 2008 while 184,000 were lost nationwide. In fact, the Texas economy is growing at three times the national average.

Additionally, Texas is one of the few - if not the only -- states entering the budget writing season without a significant shortfall.

"The term surplus simply means that the government needs to return money back to the taxpayers. However, to be in this position is a sign of our economic strength and commitment to limited government," Senator Nelson said.

### The Texas Economy

- ★ No. 1 in Job Growth
- ★ No. 1 in Exports for 6 straight years
- ★ Most Fortune 500/Fortune 1000 companies
- ★ No. 1 State For Business, CNBC
- ★ Top 5 in Biotech Development

### North Texas Region

- ★ Grew more than any other region nationwide in 2007
- ★ State's No. 1 most populated region
- ★ Nation's No. 4 most populated region

## BORDER SECURITY

Sharing the nation's longest border with Mexico, Texas is impacted disproportionately by the federal government's failure to achieve border security. While states are limited in their authority to confront the issue, last session the Texas Legislature took steps to deal with the problem, including:

- Requiring citizenship verification under the Children's Health Insurance Program;
- Denying tax benefits to employers who knowingly hire illegal immigrants;
- Allocating \$100 million in funding to support law enforcement in our border counties where drug and human trafficking continues to be a major problem.

This issue is expected to be a focal point in the upcoming session. The Senate Committee on Transportation & Homeland Security is examining the effectiveness of border funds and the possibility of a tamper-proof driver's license or photo ID that complies with the federal Real ID Act. This committee, in a joint study with the International Relations & Trade Committee, will make broad recommendations to stem the tide of illegal immigration, drug trafficking, and human smuggling, and to reduce criminal activities within the border region.

# TRANSPORTATION

## NEW TxDOT LEADER A NORTH TEXAN

Governor Perry recently named one of Senator Nelson's constituents, former Fort Worth City Councilman Bill Meadows of Fort Worth, to the Texas Transportation Commission. Senator Nelson, who serves on the committee charged with confirming gubernatorial appointments, welcomed the appointment.

"I appreciate Governor Perry appointing a North Texan to the Transportation Commission," she said. "As the state's most populated metro area, we have enormous needs that are critical not just to our region -- but to the entire state, mainly because our growth is driving the state economy. Mobility is not just a convenience issue in our region. It affects our air quality, our economy, emergency responders, and the ability of our citizens to access health care."

## EASTERN DENTON COUNTY ROAD PROJECTS SLATED

Eastern Denton County has been chosen for the first of several transportation projects funded through up-front concession payments from the North Texas Tollway Authority for the right to collect tolls on the new SH 121. A 2.8-mile stretch of Eldorado Parkway (FM 2934) between Little Elm and the Dallas North Tollway will be widened from a two-lane rural road to a six-lane, divided thoroughfare.

"The Regional Transportation Council should be commended for putting eastern Denton County at the front of the line, especially considering that the residents of Frisco, Little Elm, The Colony, and other high-growth communities in eastern Denton County will be paying the tolls on SH 121," Senator Nelson said.

## TRANSPORTATION & HOMELAND SECURITY INTERIM CHARGES

- Recommend improvements to Metropolitan Planning Organizations (such as our Regional Transportation Council);
- Study options for minimizing diversions from the Fund 6 highway budget;
- Review plans for the Trans Texas Corridor and other projects under consideration that involve the tolling of state highways by foreign or private companies;
- Review the status of structurally deficient bridges.



# HEALTH & SAFETY

## LESS THAN A THIRD OF TEXAS STUDENTS IN "HEALTHY ZONE"

Elementary students performed better than students in higher grade levels, but overall less than a third of Texas students hit "healthy zone" benchmarks in the first round of fitness assessments established under SB 530, authored by Senator Nelson.

"These results confirm that our children's health is suffering because of a sedentary, supersized lifestyle," she said. "We cannot allow an entire generation of Texans to grow up and live shorter lives than the previous generation. But it will happen unless we get back to the basics of ensuring the health of our young people with a strong focus on fitness and nutrition."

Until 2001, when Senator Nelson authored legislation calling for daily exercise in grades K-5, Texas' PE require-

FITNESS ASSESSMENT RESULTS		
Grade	% Girls in Healthy Zone	% Boys in Healthy Zone
3	32.09	27.65
4	27.4	20.36
5	23.03	17.29
6	22.59	17.1
7	20.93	16.93
8	18.7	17.55
9	13.4	14.4
10	11.94	13.12
11	10.25	11.71
12	7.82	8.56

ment was limited to 1.5 credits needed for graduation. Senator Nelson has worked to strengthen PE each session -- most recently with SB 530, expanding the PE requirement to middle school and initiating annual fitness assessments for students grades 3-12.



Governor Rick Perry signs into law SB 530 by Senator Nelson, strengthening PE in our schools to improve student health, at Forest Vista Elementary School in Flower Mound. Also on hand is Dr. Kenneth Cooper, CEO of Dallas' Cooper Institute.

Texas is the first state to conduct such tests, which measured body composition, aerobic capacity, strength, endurance and flexibility. In the weeks ahead, the results will be correlated with other information to see if there is a relationship between fitness and academic achievement, attendance and other issues.

### HHS CHARGES

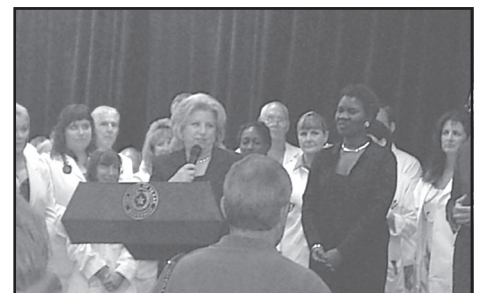
Senator Nelson serves as Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health & Human Services and other panels reviewing the state's health and human service challenges. "The constant challenge in health care policy is making sure we protect the health of our citizens while also taking care of our fiscal health," Senator Nelson said. "Because a third of the state budget goes to health and human services, we have a responsibility to ensure that we are making the best possible use of every penny."

Following is a partial list of issues under review:

- Monitor the implementation of SB 10 by Senator Nelson to contain costs, streamline services and improve outcomes in Medicaid and to reduce the state's rate of uninsured;
- Review efforts to care for and protect disabled and mentally challenged Texans in our state schools and community homes;
- Enhance efforts to prevent child abuse, reduce caseloads at CPS and recruit foster homes for 28,000 displaced children in the foster system;
- Study ways to improve access to long-term and home health care for Texas' aging population;
- Ensure that the state is prepared for pandemic flu and other medical disasters;
- Analyze the state's future health care work force needs and consider establishing Health Enterprise Zones to improve health care access in Texas' rural and underserved areas;
- Monitor the collection and availability of cord blood stem cells for treatments and research in Texas;
- Recommend ways to reduce the number of uninsured Texans by providing insurance incentives for employers;
- Review the systems used to determine eligibility for state services.

### REFORMING MEDICAID & IMPROVING HEALTH CARE

Last year the Texas Legislature approved SB 10 by Senator Nelson to reform Medicaid and help reduce the state's rate of uninsured. Just 5 years ago Medicaid accounted for 18% of the state budget. Today it accounts for 34%. The provisions of SB 10, pending approval of a federal Medicaid waiver, will allow the state to charge co-pays for nonemergency visits to the emergency room, use incentives to encourage smoking cessation and other healthy lifestyles, and establish a pool of funding to help connect more Texans with private health insurance. "The



Senator Nelson speaks at John Peter Smith Hospital during the bill signing ceremony for SB 10, which she authored to reform Medicaid and help relieve the burden on hospital emergency rooms.

goal of this legislation is to make better use of the dollars we spend treating our uninsured citizens," Senator Nelson said.

### TEXAS LEADS FIGHT AGAINST CANCER

Last November, Texas voters approved Proposition 15, sponsored by Senator Nelson to establish the Cancer Prevention & Research Institute of Texas. The institute will be authorized to disburse grants for cancer research and prevention efforts that would otherwise go unfunded.

"This is a historic commitment -- one that will help our universities and laboratories, retain our best and brightest scientists and make Texas the nation's premiere center for cancer research. Most importantly, it will help save lives," Senator Nelson said.

Of those research proposals deemed worthy of pursuit by the National Can-



Senator Nelson receives Susan G. Komen For The Cure's first-ever Legislative Champion Award.

cer Institute, just 1 in 10 receive funding. Scientists believe a major breakthrough awaits in that 90 percent of unfunded proposals. We lose 35,000 Texans every year to cancer and sustain an economic impact of \$35 billion a year.

### EFFORTS CONTINUE TO IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH

Senator Nelson recently announced that MHMR of Tarrant County received \$4.1 million in new state funding for crisis mental health services as part of a statewide push to improve mental health services.

"These funds are going to have a positive impact in the lives of our citizens affected by mental health problems -- the patients and their loved ones," Senator Nelson, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health & Human Services, said. "Specifically, they are meant to provide treatment alternatives to state hospitals and jails -- which can be avoided in many cases with proper crisis health services."

In the next session, Senator Nelson is considering legislation designed to expand options for Texans in need of drug and alcohol treatment.

# District Survey

1. Rank the issues you consider the greatest challenge facing our state:

Respondent #1	Respondent #2	
_____	_____	A. Jobs & The Economy
_____	_____	B. Property Taxes
_____	_____	C. Quality of Education in Public Schools
_____	_____	D. Crime & Drugs
_____	_____	E. Health Care Costs & Patient Access to Care
_____	_____	F. Transportation
_____	_____	G. The Environment
_____	_____	H. Illegal Immigration
_____	_____	I. Other: _____

2. Do you support/oppose:

RESPONDENT 1		RESPONDENT 2		
Support	Oppose	Support	Oppose	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Raising additional funds for state highways by indexing the gas tax to inflation?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Allowing a regional vote to raise the local sales tax by 1 cent to generate funding for mass transit in North Texas?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Limiting the amount of revenue local governments can raise through taxes and requiring voter approval of any proposal to exceed that limit?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Replacing the new business margins tax with an expanded state sales tax on goods & services?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Returning to regulated electric utility monopolies and removing consumer choice in electric providers?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Allowing private entities to build and manage new tolled lanes on highways in exchange for initial payments to help fund other local road projects?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Making it a crime for an employer to knowingly hire illegal immigrants?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prohibiting “sanctuary cities” where local police are not allowed to detain violators of federal immigration laws?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Requiring a 2-year waiting period and counseling for couples seeking a divorce?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Top 10 % rule governing admission to Texas’ universities?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Using taxpayer dollars to defray the cost of health insurance for employees of small businesses?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Requiring physical education in every grade level?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Requiring all girls entering the 6th grade to be vaccinated against HPV?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Privatizing the Texas Lottery to generate additional state revenue?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Requiring voters to present photo ID in order to vote?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Imposing a statewide smoking ban in all workplaces, including bars and restaurants?

**TO MAIL QUESTIONNAIRE PLEASE CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE, FOLD, TAPE AND PLACE POSTAGE STAMP.**  
Please return your completed survey, along with any additional comments, to P.O. Box 12068, Austin, TX 78711. Or fax to the Capitol Office at 512-463-0923 or to the District Office at 817-488-6648. Or fill out an expanded version of this survey online at [www.nelson.senate.state.tx.us/survey](http://www.nelson.senate.state.tx.us/survey).

Name (s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ TX Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Business Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

# COMMUNITY & SCHOOLS

## REGIONAL GROWTH

The DFW Metroplex added more than 160,000 people in 2007 – more than any other major metropolitan area in the nation. Last year that distinction went to the Houston area – largely due to the influx of people displaced by Gulf Coast hurricanes. The Dallas-Fort Worth area has quietly become the most populated region in Texas and has overtaken Philadelphia as the nation’s No. 4 region behind New York, Los Angeles and Chicago.

In its recent list of Best Places to Live in the U.S., Money magazine selected more cities in Texas than any other state. Not surprisingly, many of our own communities in Senate District 12 were recognized, including Denton, Euless, Frisco and Lewisville. Additionally, Watauga ranked second nationally on the list of best cities for affordable housing.

“We are truly fortunate to live in a part of the country where economic growth is continuing,” Senator Nelson said. “I congratulate the civic and business leaders of these communities for this prestigious national honor.”

## EDUCATION

Quality public schools and institutions of higher education are critical to the future of Texas. Both the Senate Finance and Senate Education committees are reviewing the state’s education policies and funding mechanisms. “To truly resolve our education challenges, we need to support our teachers, encourage more parental involvement, restore discipline to the classroom and focus on teaching students -- not tests,” Senator Nelson said. Following are some of the related issues under review:

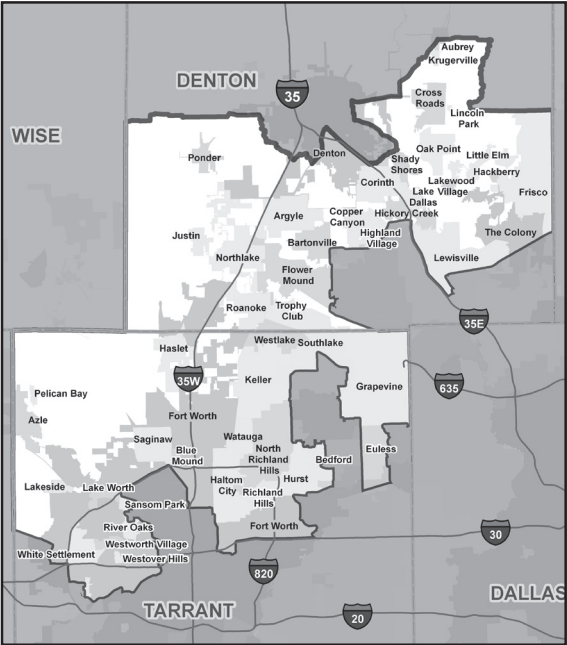


Senator Nelson attended the 20-year anniversary of Christian Community Action. She is an advisory board member of the Denton County charity.



Senator Nelson gave the keynote address at Robson Ranch’s “Salute to America” event and met with individuals who recently earned their American citizenship.

- Gauge the efforts of Texas' public schools to serve students with autism or other special needs;
- Conduct a comprehensive review of the public school accountability system;
- Study ways to advance adult literacy in Texas;
- Review policies regarding students with limited English proficiency;
- Evaluate the effects of tuition deregulation;
- Explore different methods for encouraging diversity at our flagship universities;
- Analyze proposals designed to reduce property tax rates, including appraisal caps and revenue caps on local governments.



Senate District 12 includes parts of Tarrant and Denton Counties, covering all or part of 60 cities, 21 school districts, and 23 chambers of commerce.



890728711-2068  
P.O. BOX 12068  
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711-2068  
**Senator Jane Nelson**

PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE





# GET INVOLVED

## FOLLOW THE LEGISLATURE

The Texas Legislature meets in regular session for 140 days in every odd-numbered year, in accordance with the Texas Constitution. The framers envisioned a citizen legislature that would adhere to the principles of limited government, meeting for a short period of time in order to pass a 2-year budget, consider legislative revisions and then go home to live and work under the laws they pass.

The governor has the authority to call the Legislature into a special session that can last no longer than 30 days. Only items specified by the governor may be considered in a special session. The next regular session of the Texas Legislature will begin Jan 13, 2009 and conclude June 1, 2009.

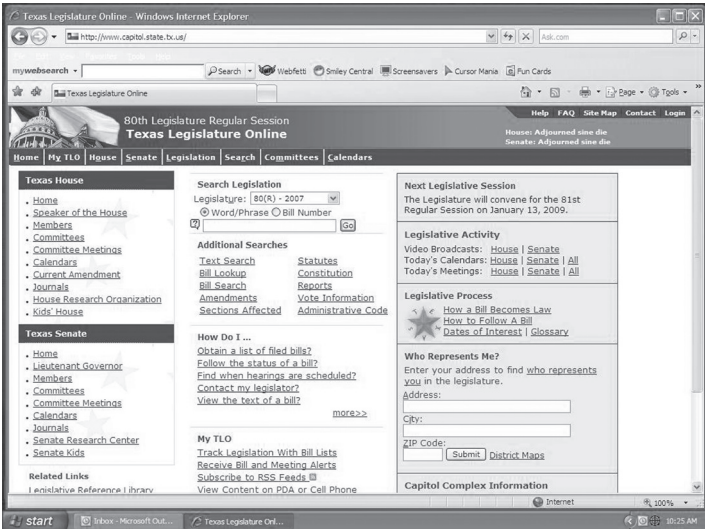
### Bill Tracking

Texas Legislature Online.....[www.capitol.state.tx.us](http://www.capitol.state.tx.us)

Texas Senate Online.....[www.senate.state.tx.us](http://www.senate.state.tx.us)

Bill Status Hotline.....1-877-824-7038

E-mail notification .....[www.capitol.state.tx.us](http://www.capitol.state.tx.us)  
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THE TEXAS SENATE IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER AND DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE ON THE BASIS OF RACE, COLOR, NATIONAL ORIGIN, SEX, RELIGION, AGE OR DISABILITY IN EMPLOYMENT OR THE PROVISION OF SERVICES.



*On the South Steps of the Texas State Capitol, Senator Nelson visits with students from Cross Timbers Middle School in North Texas. The Capitol Building, completed in 1888 and renovated in 1993, welcomes more than 1 million visitors every year. It is the largest in square footage of all state capitols and is second in total size only to the National Capitol in Washington, D.C. Go to [tspb.state.tx.us](http://tspb.state.tx.us) for more information about visiting the Texas Capitol.*

## VOTING IN 2008 ELECTIONS

Elections are administered on the state level by the office of the Secretary of State and locally by the Denton County elections division and the Tarrant County elections division.

To be eligible to register to vote in Texas, you must:

- be a U.S. citizen;
- be a resident of the county;
- be 18 years old (you may register at 17 years and 10 months);
- not a convicted felon (unless a person's sentence is completed, including any probation or parole);
- not declared mentally incapacitated by a court of law.

To vote in the 2008 General Election, you must be registered at least a month in advance of the election. To have a voter registration card mailed to your home, fill out the postage-paid application form (link to: <http://w03web.sos.state.tx.us/vrrequest/index.asp>).

For more information about voting in Texas, visit the Texas Secretary of State online at [www.sos.state.tx.us](http://www.sos.state.tx.us) or call 1-800-252-8683. You may contact the Tarrant County Elections Office at 817-884-1115 or online at [www.tarrantcounty.com/evote](http://www.tarrantcounty.com/evote); Denton County Elections Office at 940-349-3200 or online at [www.elections.dentoncounty.com](http://www.elections.dentoncounty.com).

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SENATOR OF THE STATE OF TEXAS  
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